

A 100 year old Correction

Duxbury man ensures his father's recognition

Duxbury Clipper

By MORAG MACLACILAN

The year was 1907. A Provincetown rivalry was being played out in Massachusetts Bay that August as the *Rose Dorothea* and the *Jessie Costa* competed for the Lipton Cup.

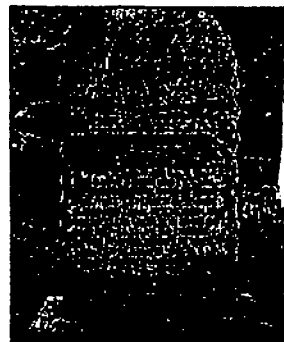
Sir Thomas Lipton was originally from Glasgow, Scotland. Lipton had been racing in Europe with his Shamrock fleet. But after years of failed attempts at winning the coveted America's Cup, Lipton, of the tea bag fortune, came to the United States and paid to have several silver Lipton Cups commissioned as rewards to ships that won certain yacht races.

Such a cup was donated to The Fishermen's Cup, also called the Lipton Cup Race of Provincetown. Capt. Thomas

McManus of Essex paired with Lipton to sponsor the 42-mile race from Boston to Gloucester and back to Boston. McManus was a Massachusetts based schooner builder. Both the *Rose Dorothea* and the *Jessie Costa* interested him because both ships were only two years old at the time of the race and were considered the new technology of the times.

The Lipton Cup was incorporated into Boston's Old Home Week celebration. Instead of being geared for yachts, the race's participants had to be fishing vessels, thus the name The Fishermen's Cup. The *Rose Dorothea's* usual captain for commercial fishing expeditions was Capt. Marion Perry. Perry, realizing his strengths were not in racing, asked Capt. John Watson of Clark's Island to take the helm the day of the race. Watson's uncle was famous yachting skipper Nathan Burgess Watson.

Five boats took to the course, but it was the Provincetown schooners that dominated the race...their times coming within seconds of each other at Eastern Point in Gloucester. Upon rounding this point, the *Rose Dorothea* sustained a blow many thought would take the ship out of its first place standing...the foretopmast snapped off. However, Capt. Watson's quick thinking helped maintain the ship's lead. He turned the vessel into the wind while the crew disposed of the wreckage. The weather was in the ship's favor as well with the winds



Clint Watson of Acorn Street took this photo of a memorial to the *Rose Dorothea* three years ago in Provincetown. He noticed the stone incorrectly lists Marion Perry as the captain of the ship when it won the Lipton Cup Race back in 1907. Watson's father, John Watson, was actually the captain of the *Rose Dorothea* the day the ship won the race.

guiding the *Rose Dorothea* to victory at two minutes and 34 seconds ahead of the *Jessie Costa*.

The vessel showed off Watson's navigation skills and shot him and the *Rose Dorothea* to fame. The Lipton Cup was bestowed on the vessel.

Fast forward to 2003 when John Watson's son Clint Watson of Acorn Street took a trip to Provincetown and noticed a granite memorial to the *Rose Dorothea's* feat outside of town hall. Yet to his surprise, the 1907 victory was attributed to Capt. Marion Perry and his crew, instead of his father.

"It will be 100 years next year and I think it's time. He deserves some recognition," Watson said. He was able to track down his now deceased father's paperwork that contained an original photo of the

Rose Dorothea sans a portion of the top mast. An article in the *Atlantic Fisherman* magazine dated March 1924 also featured a front page story taking a look back at the famous race. Watson copied this information and drafted a letter to the Provincetown Historical Commission. Three years later, Watson received a reply from Provincetown in the form of an invitation to be a special guest at the rededication of the Lipton Cup.

Watson and his family, representing three generations, attended the rededication of the cup held at the Provincetown Library on Wednesday, June 14. Watson said the Lipton Cup was supposed to become an annual event in Provincetown but no other race ever came to fruition, thus making the *Rose Dorothea* the sole winner of the nearly 100 year old cup.

Vice Chairman of the Provincetown Board of Library Trustees Edward "Mick" Rudd said when the granite memorial was built, the error on who was the captain of the *Rose Dorothea* occurred because Capt. Perry was the usual captain of the ship for its commercial endeavors. Watson said next to the cup on display in the library sits a placard stating that John Watson was the captain of the *Rose Dorothea* the day the ship won the Lipton Cup.

"Capt. Perry was very shrewd to recognize that his specialty was not racing, so he contacted Capt. Watson. Watson was the strategist for the race. We were honored to have Mr. (Clint) Watson and his family attend the dedication. It presented a fuller picture of the race. It was a very significant event for us to have people directly descended from the race in

attendance. It made history come alive," Rudd said on Friday.

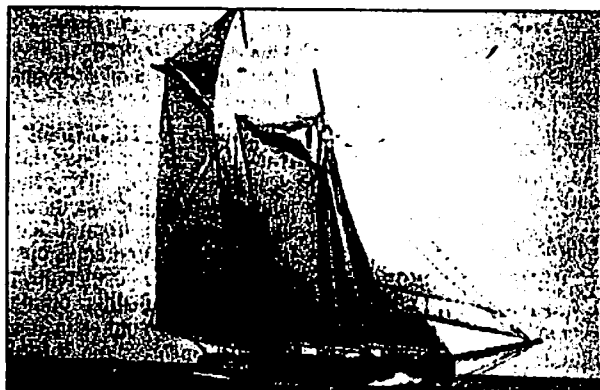
Rudd said the cup was actually stolen at one point and later recovered after being found buried in the sand. After that incident, the cup was kept in a safe at Town Hall before being brought out three years ago for a schooner regatta. The level of curiosity generated about the cup upon its rare viewing during the regatta prompted the town to have the cup cleaned and to have a permanent home for the cup erected in a locked glass case on the first floor of the Provincetown Public Library.

The dedication to the race doesn't stop with the cup being on display. A half model of the original *Rose Dorothea* sits on the second floor of the library in the children's room. The model is 64 feet in length and Rudd said when the town decided to make the building presently holding the model a library, adjustments to fit the structure's new use around the ship became crucial.

"It's quite a dramatic exhibit. We had kind of a ship-in-the-bottle situation. And then with the Watsons here it's kind of the icing on the cake for us," Rudd said.

Watson and his wife, along with three of their children and several grandchildren, attended the dedication ceremony in Provincetown two weeks ago. Watson said he was just 10 years old when his father died at the age of 65. Watson now feels a sense of justice knowing that his father has posthumously gained the recognition he deserves.

"I hope he would be proud of the fact that someone recognized what he did," Watson said.



This original photo of the *Rose Dorothea* taken back in 1907 shows the top mast snapped off. Despite this setback, the ship went on to win the Lipton Cup in a race from Boston to Gloucester and back.